



McLoughlins' Missive December 2013

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Looking back over the last 12 months, it's been a year of highs and lows.

We so enjoyed sharing our little granddaughter's first Christmas, when Ruth and Neil brought her to us in Tassie last year, at only two months old. This year we're going to Auckland to be with them for the first Christmas Emma will really appreciate. Can't wait to see her little face on Christmas morning! She's growing up fast, and has just been on her first big bike ride.



Ruth and Neil took her back to the UK in April to meet the rest of the family, and were there to greet the arrival of the latest family member, our great-niece, Lily, Hannah and Andrew's first child.

April also saw Mike retire from the bank, but not for a life of leisure. He's President of his branch of Rotary International this year, so is being kept very busy with all the fund-raising events they organise, on top of the day-to-day running of the farm.



The money man at International Night

As Mike retired, Hazel joined the workforce and is teaching English to newly-arrived migrants, three days a week, in Launceston. It's an hour and a half's drive away, so means an early start in the morning, but she's enjoying the challenge and the chance to help her students make a fresh start in life. She was initially quite shocked to discover that some of them had lived all their lives in a refugee camp before coming to Australia.



In May came the first of the year's lows, as we said a final goodbye to our old friend, Quinn, just a month shy of his 15th birthday. We miss him badly but treasure the memories of all the fun he gave us. We now have a couple (at least) of resident wallabies in the garden!



During the school holidays in July, we managed to fit in some grandparent time in Auckland, catching up on the hugs we'd missed since Christmas and relearning how to connect with a little 9-month-old (it's a long time since ours were that age!). We shared Emma's delight in the tropical fish at a local butterfly farm. (She wasn't too sure about the butterflies.)

At the end of August, John and Vicky celebrated their first wedding anniversary. Could it really have been a year since the wedding? We still have lovely memories of that. John joined the NHS in April, as Senior Finance Lead of their

Commissioning Board. He still runs marathons, the latest being the Yorkshire Marathon in October. Vicky's a competitive runner too, and completed the Abbey Dash in November. She was given a well-deserved promotion during the year, which has seen her do some globe-trotting for her company.



We didn't expect to see them this year, but were back in the UK at the end of September, sadly for the funeral of Hazel's sister's husband, Alasdair, who lost his life to cancer at the age of 75. We stayed to celebrate Janice's birthday at the beginning of October, when John and Vicky treated us to a live performance of Jesus Christ Superstar at the Leeds Arena, which was superb.

In October little Emma turned one—how fast did that year go!!



Merry Christmas to all. Hope 2014 is good to you.

Hazel & Mike